

# A Vocabulary of the Jakuns of Batu Pahat, Johore, together with some remarks on their customs and peculiarities.

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At the headwaters of the Sembrong, the Bekok and the Simpang Kiri in the interior of Johore, three large streams which, draining one into the other, form lower down the Batu Pahat River, are to be found scattered families of Jakuns. These people live by agriculture, are employed by the Chinese pepper and gambier cultivators in clearing jungle for them, and furnish the Malays through barter, their stock of jungle produce. Years of contact with the Chinaman have robbed them of much of their primitiveness. So great is their assimilation to the Chinaman, that when cadging a bowlful of rice from him, they have been often seen manipulating a pair of chopsticks with a dexterity unequalled by the Chinaman himself. They now profess an abhorrence for monkeys, snakes, lizards and similar delicacies, and it is sometimes amusing to behold their studied look of consternation at any one suggesting the possibility of anything so loathsome forming part of their daily menu. Yet the Malays declare that in the privacy of their own homes, they will devour anything, from a snail to an elephant. They do not regard with disfavour the giving of their daughters in marriage to Chinese planters, such unions usually assuring to them and their relations some measure of certainty of a regular supply of food. They are thus a somewhat mixed people to-day. In general appearance they are not unlike up-country Malays. There is still however that peculiar lustre in their eyes, an appearance of independence and yet of timidity, an indefinable something in fact, which to a practiced observer, at once proclaims them their primitive origin and their probable connexion with the other wild tribes further north in the peninsula. They

do not call themselves Jakuns, that word being a term of opprobrium if applied to them within their hearing. Curiously enough, the Sakais also resent the application of the word Sakai to them, and like the Sakais again, they call themselves *Orang Ulu*, up-country people. The Malays in their dealings with the Jakuns, call them *Pa angkat* (adopted father) *Ma angkat* (adopted mother) *adik angkat* (adopted younger brother) and so on as the case may be. This pleases them hugely, though not to the extent of inducing them to part with their stock any cheaper or in greater quantity. For all that, they are very much harrassed and robbed by the Malays, in particular by those who have some authority over them. In my journeys into the interior of Batu Pahat, I have often had patiently to listen to the complaints of these men against their Malay oppressors, many of undoubted genuineness, without however having the power to render any relief.

It may not perhaps be generally known that the Jakuns practice the rite of circumcision, but in a way peculiar to themselves. They do not, like the Mohammedans, remove the whole skin, but merely part the upper folds of the prepuce by a longitudinal cut or incision, causing the rest to drop into a bunch below. Asked as to the reason for this peculiar rite, the oldest man present related to me the following legend. Very many years ago, when the whole country belonged to them and they were under the rule of a great Batin (King of their own, as great as the Sultan of Johore,) this great Batin had a wife who for a long time remained childless. At length, a male child was born to them, who after thriving for some time sickened and was on the point of death. On consulting a *Pawang* (Diviner or Sorcerer) who happened in this case to have been a Mohammedan Malay, he declared that the only means of saving the youth's life was by circumcision. To this the great Batin demurred but vowed that if his child recovered, he would be circumscised. He got well and the operation was in due time performed but in order that he might not thereby be held to have embraced the Mohammedan faith, this peculiar style was adopted, the fiat having in the meantime gone forth that all male Jakun children were in future to undergo this operation in the manner indicated above, which explains the existence of this peculiar

custom to-day. This custom is utterly unknown to the northern Sakais who appear to dread the operation, so much so that many Pahang Sakais have told me that but for this one operation, they would have embraced the Mohammedan faith. Another reason why a Sakai will not become a Mohammedan is that he will be obliged to eschew such delicacies as he from time to time picks up in the jungle, in particular the bamboo rat (*Rhizomys*) which is to him the most toothsome and delicate of foods!

These Batu Pahat Jakuns told me that in days of old, they possessed a very extensive vocabulary of their own. All that now remains of this once extensive vocabulary are a few words, which they still use interspersed with Malay and which are transcribed below. Even these few remaining words, the rising generation of Jakuns do not appear inclined to use, so that in a short time, their once extensive language will be a thing of the past. I should add that a great number of these words have appeared in one of the earlier issues of the Journal collected by Lieut. Kelsall, R. E., from the Endau Jakuns, while a few seem peculiar to the Batu Pahat people.

**List of Jakun Words at present in use among the  
Jakuns of Batu Pahat.**

Now, klak.

Day after to morrow, duâk'.

Morning, lom. ("Lom" in Siamese means air.)

Thunder, pâteh. ("Patēh" is "Slave" in Malay.)

Lightning, gintal.

Tiger, jerokee.

You, atok, hee. (Heh is Sakai for you.)

Boy, kôlop. (In Perak "kulup" also means boy among Malays, while in Pahang, the same word means, among Pahang Malays, male organ of generation.)

Girl, dai-ying (Siamese for woman is Pu ying)

Father, bai.

Aunt, amai.

Uncle, wâh.

Unmarried man, penganting.

„ girl, dai-ang.

Cheek, pipī.  
 Chin, dago.  
 Forehead, kening.  
 Eyebrow, bulu halis.  
 Widower, balu.  
 Widow, indong balu.  
 Divorced man, silai.  
 Divorced woman, indong silai.  
 Cold, sidék.  
 Father of first born child, p'miot.  
 Mother „ „ „ „ indong miot.  
 Porcupine, sebuntu.  
 Gibbon, tawók.  
 Dog, koyok.  
 Durian fruit (*Durio Zibechinus* L.), tuang  
 Tampui (*Baccaurea Malayana*), berket.  
 Papaya (*Carica Papaya*), kuntaia.  
 Sweet potato, tilak.  
 Don't know, bê-nâ-hûk.  
 Finished, bek.  
 Man, b'orang.  
 Woman, oyang.  
 Father of dead child, mantai.  
 Mother „ „ „ indong mantai.  
 Want, endák.  
 Don't want, n'gnin.  
 To procreate, m'nuju.  
 Female organ, kache.  
 Drink, jo'ho.  
 Thirst, chekat.  
 Tired, kâbo.  
 Head of father or mother-in-law, hambubu.  
 Forehead, k'ning.  
 Heel, tumbit.  
 Mouth, bibir.  
 Jungle, debri.  
 Ant, m'ret.  
 Elephant, pechem  
 Mosquito, rêngit.

Pig, jokot.

Rhinoceros, s'ukrat.

Come, kiah.

Friend, teman.

Knee, to-ut.

Frog, bihong, or chikong or B'bap.

To kill, kleng.

Weak, beh rot or bel alah.

Firestick, lârak,

Firewood, Ungun api or chel-hér.

Not got, póhôs

Rainbow, bohuta or kawat.

Blow pipe, temiang. (Temiang is Malay for that particular species of bamboo from which Blow Pipes are made, the *Bamboosa Wrayi*.)

River bank, t'rbis.

Angry, t'keng.

No, béh.

Go, jôk.

Spider, t'wowoh.

Woodpecker, t'rlom.

Leprosy, p'ngundim or barak.

Korap, (a kind of ringworm common among all jungle men, likewise among Malays and Siamese who dwell in the interior) Losong.